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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINES: 2007 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM

11. (U) Summary: The Philippines, one of the earliest supporters in the global coalition against terrorism, continues to cooperate with the United States on bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism efforts. In 2007, eight of 140 bombings that occurred in the Philippines were ascribed to terrorism, while the motive for 78 bombings is unknown. Intensive civil-military and internal security operations were conducted to eliminate terrorist safehavens in the Sulu Archipelago and central Mindanao. Thirty-eight Abu Sayyaf Group members were captured and arrested and 127 were killed by Philippine military and law enforcement authorities in 12007. Fourteen members of the Abu Sayyaf Group were sentenced to life imprisonment for their role in the May 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping of 20 persons, including three Americans. President Arroyo signed landmark anti-terrorism legislation to improve the Philippine government's ability to investigate and prosecute terrorism crimes. End Summary.

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GENERAL ASSESSMENT  
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12. (U) The Philippines, one of the earliest supporters in the global coalition against terrorism, continues to cooperate closely with the United States on bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism efforts.

13. (U) The Philippines faces numerous threats from terrorism. Operating within the country are the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Communist Party of the Philippines/New Peoples Army (CPP/NPA), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), all of which the U.S. Government has designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). In addition, the Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB) and the Pentagon Gang are on the U.S. Terrorist Exclusion List.

14. (U) In 2007, 140 bombings and 46 explosions left 142 dead and 534 injured in the Philippines, according to the Philippine National Police (PNP) Bomb Data Center. According to PNP, 44 bombings were the result of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), 63 from grenades, 3 from landmines, and 30 from other ordnance/explosives. PNP investigations established the motives for eight of the 140 bombings as terrorism, while 15 bombings were election related, 13 were extortion, 10 stemmed from revenge, four from "harassment," three for "emotional reasons," two for "political" reasons, two for "personal gain," two were accidental, two were "ideological," and one was vandalism. The motives for the remaining 78 bombings remain unknown.

15. (U) In January, five bombs exploded in Tacurong, Cotabato, General Santos, and Kidapawan cities in Mindanao

killing eight people and injuring over 20. In May, two bombs exploded in Tacurong and Cotabato cities killing six people and injuring 43. In June, two bombs exploded inside of commuter buses in central Mindanao killing eleven people. In September, a bomb exploded in Cotabato City injuring one person. Also in September, three bombs exploded in a market area and public square in Zamboanga City, western Mindanao injuring one person. In November, a bomb exploded within a shopping mall in Kidapawan City killing one person and injuring eight.

¶6. (U) Philippine authorities recovered 18 improvised explosive devices, 33 grenades, and 49 military ordnance/vintage bombs. Thirteen bomb threats/hoaxes also occurred in 2007, according to PNP data.

¶7. (U) Philippine authorities had numerous successes against terrorists in 2007. According to the Philippines Department of Justice, thirty-eight ASG members were captured or apprehended. On January 13, Philippine law enforcement authorities arrested Kule Mamagong in North Cotabato for his involvement in three bombings that left six dead and 36 injured. On March 11, Philippine military officials captured ASG member Abu Usman for his role in a January 2001 kidnapping in Lantawan, Basilan. On March 16, Philippine security forces on Basilan captured ASG member Merang Abate for his involvement in several kidnappings. In late March, the Philippine police arrested Pentagon Gang members, Alimona Cali and Beru Mendoza, for their role in a 1997 kidnapping of five civilians. On May 9, the Philippine police arrested Taya Kulat for his involvement in a bombing in Tacurong City. On May 11, Philippine security forces raided an ASG safehouse on Simunul Island, Tawi Tawi, and arrested four children of fugitive JI bomber, Dulmatin, and deported them

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to Indonesia. In September, Philippine security officials arrested eight ASG members on Palawan Island and in Zamboanga. On November 12, Philippine security officials arrested Demaatol Guialal in Sultan Kudarat for his involvement in two bombings that left six dead and over 20 injured. On December 6, 14 ASG members were sentenced to life imprisonment for the May 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping of 20 people, including three Americans. On December 10, Philippine authorities arrested ASG member Abdel Kamala in Zamboanga City for his role in the 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping and June 2001 attack on Lamitan, Basilan.

¶8. (U) Philippine security forces killed 127 ASG members during armed encounters in 2007, according to the Anti-Terrorism Council. On January 6, the Philippine military killed five ASG terrorists and one suspected JI operative near the southern island of Tawi-Tawi. On January 7, the Philippine military killed ASG bomb expert, Binang Sali, in a firefight on Jolo. On January 16, Philippine military forces killed ASG spokesman Jainal Sali a.k.a. Abu Solaiman during an armed encounter on Jolo. On August 18, the Philippine military killed ASG members, Furuji and Umair Indama, who were involved in the 2001 beheading of U.S. citizen Guillermo Sobero, an October 2002 bombing that killed a U.S. serviceman, and the July 10 beheadings of 10 Philippine Marines on Basilan. In the aftermath of a November 13 bombing at Congress that left five dead and nine injured, Philippine law enforcement authorities killed ASG member, Abu Jandal, during a raid of a safehouse in Manila. On December 15, Philippine security forces killed ASG member Mubin Sakandal in Tawi-Tawi.

¶9. (U) U.S. and Philippine authorities worked closely during 2007 on rewards programs targeting terrorist groups. The U.S. Department of State paid \$5 million in June through its Rewards for Justice Program to informants who provided information that led to the killing and later recovery of the remains of ASG leader Khadaffy Janjalani. Also in June, the U.S. Department of State Rewards for Justice Program paid \$5 million to several informants for information leading to the

killing of ASG leader Jainal Sali a.k.a Abu Solaiman. Using its rewards program, the U.S. Department of Defense made payments to informants whose information led to the capture of: Khair Malvan Mundos (\$10,000, April), Mohammad Yusuf Karim (\$30,000, April), Redendo Delloso (\$35,000, April), Mariano Lomarda (\$7,500, April), Abubakar Delos Reyes (\$5,000, April), Binang Andang Sali (\$35,000, April), Jundam Jamalul (\$50,000 April), Ismin Sahiron (\$50,000, June), Alnaser Parad (\$30,000, June), and Itting and Omar Sailani (November, \$50,000). In total, the U.S. paid out \$10,302,500 for information leading to the arrest or killing of 13 ASG members.

¶10. (U) The passage of the Human Security Act (HSA) during 2007 was a major step forward in the modernization of Philippine law enforcement tools for use against terrorists. It permits wiretapping of members of judicially designated terrorist organizations, as well as financial investigations of individuals connected to terrorist organizations. However, the Human Security Act has yet to be used in actual cases, as the Anti-Terrorism Council develops procedures and protocols to comply with strict restrictions specified in the new law.

¶11. (U) Problems in the law enforcement system still hamper bringing terrorists to justice in the Philippines, including limited financial resources, inadequate salaries, corruption, low morale, and limited cooperation between police and prosecutors. The Philippine government is working to improve the situation with U.S. and other foreign assistance. In December, OPDAT-funded training was provided in Manila by U.S. prosecutors and FBI agents to 34 representatives of the Philippine Anti-Terrorism Council. The training was directed at assisting the Philippines in the implementation of the HSA. The training focused on ways to use electronic surveillance authority contained in the HSA, and on procedures that could be used to obtain judicial designation of organizations as terrorist under the HSA.

¶12. (U) The Philippine government contributed fully to regional and international efforts to combat terrorist financing and strives to fulfill its responsibilities through the United Nations to detect and block the flow of funding to individuals and entities that support terrorism. The implementation of the Human Security Act will facilitate these efforts.

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¶13. (U) The Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), operating under the Philippine Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001 (AMLA), as amended in 2003, pursues the investigation and prosecution of money laundering and is the lead agency responsible for implementing the asset freeze measures called for by the UN Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee. The Philippine government has signed and ratified all 12 international conventions and protocols related to terrorism, including those pertaining to the suppression of terrorist financing. The AMLA is the legislative basis for the implementation of the financial actions against al-Qaida and the Taliban. Under the current law, however, the AMLC cannot take direct action against suspected terrorists or those supporting terrorism, but must apply for a court order to inquire into bank accounts and direct the freezing of assets and transactions.

¶14. (U) The United States and the Philippines government signed a bilateral Extradition Treaty in 1996. The treaty gives precedence to the Philippine government for the prosecution, conviction, and imprisonment of Filipino criminals apprehended in the Philippines, but the Philippine government has routinely issued arrest warrants for Filipino nationals whom the U.S. has sought on terrorism charges. The Philippine government did not extradite or request extradition of terrorists for prosecution during 2007.

¶15. (U) The Philippine government does not offer any support for terrorists either within or outside its borders.

¶16. (U) The Philippine government consistently supports the United States in the United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council on matters related to terrorism.

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SANCTUARY (SAFE HAVEN) ASSESSMENT  
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¶17. (U) The Philippine government conducted intensive civil-military and internal security operations during 2007 to eliminate terrorist safehavens within the Sulu Archipelago and central Mindanao. Joint U.S. - Philippines military exercises ("Balikatan") and visits by the USS Peleliu, USS Blue Ridge, USS Jarrett, USS Harpers Ferry, USS Reuben James, and USS Ford supported the Philippine government's campaign to separate terrorists from the general population and diminish support for their cause.

¶18. (U) The Armed Forces of the Philippines, with U.S. intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance support, conducted operations to capture ASG and JI leaders on the island of Jolo: Isnilon Hapilon, Omar Patek, and Dulmatin. The Philippine government is aware that some JI members have obtained safe haven in Mindanao and is actively engaged in efforts to capture them. There is an Ad Hoc Joint Action Group in which the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front cooperate against terrorists and criminals in Mindanao.

¶19. (U) Philippine military and law enforcement at the regional and provincial level work closely with U.S. Embassy counterparts and visiting military personnel to ensure counterterrorism force protection for more than 25 annual bilateral military events. In 2007, U.S. and Philippine military and law enforcement officials cooperated against JI and ASG targets, with U.S. officials actively assisting in the investigation of terrorist attacks. Members of Joint Special Operations Task Force - Philippines in the southern Philippines are involved in civil-military operations and intelligence fusion to help the AFP develop a sustained counter terrorism capability. The Embassy's law enforcement team maintains regular contact with police and security counterparts. The Mission received excellent levels of cooperation from Philippine law enforcement officials in obtaining access to terrorist detainees and witnesses for FBI interviews, and access to criminal, immigration, financial, and biographic records via the mechanisms established in the U.S. - Philippine Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security is improving the capability of Philippine agencies to respond to terrorist threats through an in-country Anti-Terrorism Program.

¶20. (U) Neither the proliferation nor the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction plays a role in terrorism in the Philippines, though the Philippine National Intelligence

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Coordinating Agency remains concerned about possible future developments.

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TERRORIST GROUPS  
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¶21. (U) The Embassy has no information suggesting that any foreign government provides financial support, military or paramilitary training, weapons, diplomatic recognition, or sanctuary from prosecution to terrorist groups operating in the Philippines.

¶22. (U) The Philippines government considers the New

People's Army as the greatest threat to the security of the Philippines, and is continuing a campaign to render the 39-year old communist insurgency "inconsequential" by 2010.

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FOREIGN GOVERNMENT COOPERATION  
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¶23. (U) The Philippines cooperates fully with the United States on bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism efforts. The Philippine Security Engagement Board is the primary mechanism for planning and coordination on non-traditional security issues, including counterterrorism and maritime security. This watershed agreement serves as the foundation for the "Kapit Bisig" (Arm-In-Arm) counterterrorism framework that focuses on civil affairs, capability upgrades, and support for AFP operations.

¶24. (U) The United States is assisting the Philippines in the establishment of interagency intelligence fusion centers to support maritime interdictions against transnational criminal/terrorist organizations as well as a "Coast Watch" system in Mindanao. A U.S. built facility, the Maritime Drug Enforcement Center; is located at the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency Headquarters in Quezon City. Three satellite centers, called Maritime Information Coordination Centers, are located at the headquarters of the Philippine Naval Forces - Western Mindanao in Zamboanga del Sur (southwestern Mindanao), the Coast Guard Station in General Santos City (south-central Mindanao), and at Poro Point, San Fernando, La Union (northwestern Luzon).

¶25. (U) The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) began issuing digitized, machine-readable passports in June. While the Philippines cooperates with USG requests for prosecutions for persons who tamper or alter travel documents, the prosecutions carry low level penalties. In addition, there is a reluctance to investigate or charge vendors or users of false documents when the Philippine government is not the issuing authority.

¶26. (U) Embassy Manila's POC for the 2007 Terrorism Report is Political Officer Stephen Worobec (worobecSF@state.gov), telephone 301-2000, ext. 2288.

KENNEY